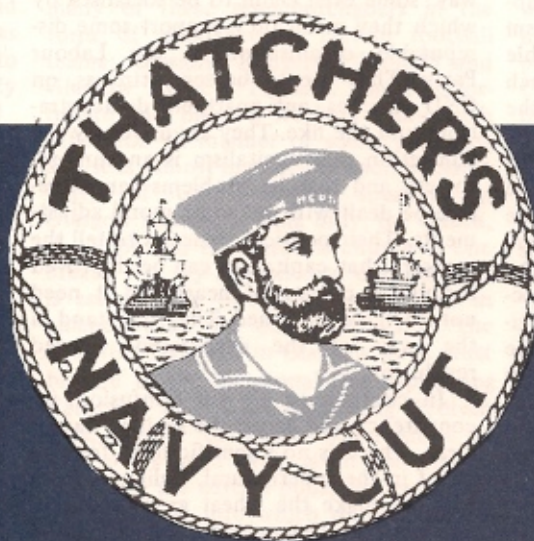


Socialist Standard

Official journal of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the World Socialist Party of Ireland · Vol 78 No 933

No. 10

FALKLANDS



**WARNING:
JINGOISM CAN
SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH**

Socialist Standard

Official journal of the Socialist Party of Great Britain

May 1982 Vol. 78 No. 933

Socialists against religion

To many people who hear the socialist case, our attack on religious ideas seems a matter of bad taste; we should not, we are often told, "bring religion into politics". Our reply is simple and direct: religion is politics.

Religious ideas, of whatever kind, are a hindrance in the urgent political task of overthrowing capitalist society and replacing it with socialism. To accomplish this, to establish a society free of exploitation, hunger, war and insecurity, the working class must concentrate on the material world in which they get their living. To dabble in the theology of the supernatural is a diversion in these efforts; it sets back the day of international mass socialist understanding and so helps to keep capitalism in being. That is why religion is political.

It is no surprise that the larger, established religions like Roman Catholicism and Protestantism found so comfortable a place in capitalism's morality. Such religions praise the process by which the working class are exploited and are denied access to the abundance of wealth which they produce. Religion blesses the people, the organisations and the machines—on all sides—which in wartime plan and execute the murder and the terrorising of millions of workers. It sanctifies the personal symbols of class privilege—the weddings, the coronations, the inaugurations and the other nauseous celebrations of capitalism's ruling class. Religion is bloodily, wretchedly political.

There are of course numerous religious sects which disclaim any responsibility for the crimes and the culpability of the established churches. These sects—for example the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Christadelphians—have rather different religious theories. They often hold to a stubbornly anachronistic view of humanity's future—of an Armageddon followed by salvation for the select few who have foresworn all interest in the material reality of life. Such bizarre notions are obstacles in the way of the urgent struggle for working class awareness of the facts of capitalist life.

Equally culpable are those religions which insidiously claim to have rejected capitalism and who therefore campaign for an unending stream of reforms. Many Methodists and Quakers think in this way; some even claim to be socialists, by which they mean they support some disreputable organisation as the Labour Party. They are to be seen—tireless, on CND marches, anti-apartheid demonstrations and the like. They are driven by the conviction that capitalism is an immoral society and that its problems can therefore be dealt with by some moral adjustments. Their political stance is to tell the workers that capitalism can be improved through a change of heart and it need not, then, be abolished. They too stand in the way of the desperately needed revolution.

In contrast to all this confusion, inconsistency and deceit the socialist case is clear. There is no scientific basis for any belief in the supernatural. Religious force will not make the wheat grow, nor rear animals, nor design and produce all the other wealth of a modern society. Religious theories answer no questions about the world we live in. Humans are born into a material world, their ideas are fashioned on that world and they in turn modify it. The theory that there is something outside that material world is a pretence, an intellectual retreat before some mystery. Progress towards socialism demands an intellectual advance by the working class, to an understanding and an acceptance of a new social order.

This intellectual advance is part of the human response to material conditions. Capitalism is in a parlous state. It is murdering, starving to death, or killing by avoidable disease, tens of millions of people every year. It condemns those that

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are left alive to a burden of degrading exploitation and repression. This is not a moral issue, which can be put right by some religious upsurge. It is too pressing to be treated by the working class as a matter for finicky debate on moral niceties.

The working class response to capitalism must reflect their awareness of the system's basic inadequacy—that capitalism cannot satisfy the needs of its peoples. Yet society is capable of producing an abundance of wealth and comfort for everyone. The material and technical ability and knowledge is there; it needs only a basic change in society, to clear away the obstruction of the social relations of capitalism, to unleash them.

When the mass working class grasp that fact they will be at the point of taking the political action for the establishment of socialism. They will no longer be seeing capitalism in terms of good and evil, of saints and sinners. They will have rejected the vacuous moralising which is the essential of all religions. The clear, materialist conception of human history will have brought them to the conclusion that only a social revolution will do.

Socialism will be the common ownership of the means of wealth production and distribution. It will be a moneyless society of free access to an abundance of wealth. Human ability, liberated from the constraints of the profit motive, will take an enormous leap forward; for the first time people will live and co-operate in freedom and they will express this in a massive creativity. As a classless, democratic society, socialism will have no politics; decisions will be made on the basis of human welfare, not on class interests.

We have said that, in an increasingly dangerous world, socialism grows ever more urgent. Any hindrance to the revolution must be treated with hostility. Let no worker be deceived as to the nature of religion; it is an obstacle to social progress, a hindrance to the struggle to build a world for free people, a contribution to the decadence of a degenerate, anti-human social system.

Contents

- 83 Prods vs Papes in Glasgow
- 84 The Falklands Crisis: Doing the bulldog thing
- 86 Running Commentary
- 88 Alternative Economic Strategy or socialism
- 91 Political Notes
- 92 The Papacy: Visit from times past
- 93 Russian round table
Jim Glitz
- 94 Apartheid: divide and rule
- 96 General strike in Luxemburg
- 97 Books
- 98 Meetings
- 100 Conversation with
a deaf eye surgeon

Prods vs Papes in Glasgow

In 1878 the City of Glasgow Bank crashed to financial ruin. In the same year the Scottish Roman Catholic Hierarchy was restored by the Pope and Charles Eyre became Archbishop of Glasgow. Protestant extremists, such as members of the Orange Lodges (who even today see almost every calamity as part of a global papist conspiracy), probably saw some connection between the two events. Whatever they thought they were certain of one thing: the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy was nothing less than "papal aggression". In response they protested in Glasgow Green. The Army was sent to prevent rioting but fortunately, for Glaswegian working-class skulls, the troops were not called into action.

The main factor leading to both the restoration of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy and the religious intolerance in Glasgow was the vast influx of Irish immigrants who, since the 1840s, had been entering the industrial areas of Britain to escape the famine. From December 1847 to March 1948 alone, about 43,000 Irish arrived in Glasgow, "a mass of broken wretches".

These immigrants were generally unskilled workers who had been forced to live in conditions even more squalid and degrading than those of the indigenous proletariat. They were able, therefore, to subsist on lower wages and consequently occupied the worst slums in the city.

It is a matter of fact that competition for employment between the Irish and the similarly unskilled Glaswegian workers led to a fall in wages for the latter. The native workers did not fail to

notice this and, in their brutalised ignorance, blamed the Irish. That the majority of these unfortunate Irish workers adhered to the Roman Catholic brand of religious superstition, instead of the Protestant, was yet another focal point for hatred. The presence, too, of immigrants from the North of Ireland led to violent feuds of the Orange and Green variety among the Irish themselves. Added to this was the quarrelsome nature of the various Scottish Protestant sects who were already squabbling among themselves and were quite prepared to enter into hostilities with the adherents of the "one true church".

Nowadays, in Glasgow and the South of Scotland in general, fewer people are committed to any form of religious superstition; "of 20,000 Roman Catholics registered in Clydebank, only about a third attend church regularly" (*Current Account*, BBC1 Scotland, 25 February, 1982). Similarly an even greater proportion of those describing themselves as Protestants will only be seen inside a church at their funeral.

This decline in church attendance may seem encouraging, but unfortunately "religious" bigotry still flourishes among many of these non-churchgoers in the form of allegiance to certain football teams: Glasgow Rangers ("Prods") and Glasgow Celtic ("Papes"). These unfortunate and bigoted workers blame each other for all manner of social problems and it is almost incumbent upon Socialist Party of Great Britain speakers in Glasgow to criticise King Billy, the Queen, the Pope and the Catholic church in one breath lest, by reference to one alone, it is assumed by one side that we are in alliance with the other. Sellers of the *Socialist Standard* in Glasgow pubs must beware of the occasional IRA-supporting Catholics and UDA-supporting Protestants, neither of whom will hesitate to kick one's head in if given the chance; and there are certain pubs, particularly in the East End, into which we dare not go. Regular readers of the *Standard* will recall that our propaganda meeting of 29 July last year (the Day of the Nonsensical Nuptials) was disrupted by a frenzied gang of Orange thugs and it is a likely attack upon us by some papal-jerseyed hooligans which will prevent us from holding a similar meeting on June 1 (the day of the mumbo-jumbo at Bellahouston Park).

A woman from Livingstone, West Lothian, told us (*Current Account*, BBC1 Scotland, 25 February, 1982) that she has no need to think about anything she finds too complicated because "... the priests, the bishops, the archbishops and the Pope are better equipped to deal with this kind of thing. To advise me". An old man, asked what his religion meant to



him, was not quite sure except that he knew it was "great". "You must go to the chapel". When asked if he had ever rebelled against the church he replied: "No! Rebel? No! No!", as though shocked that anyone could conceive of such a thing.

A widow then informed us that her wayward husband's death-bed return to the faith convinced her of the existence of god. Although she was prepared to listen to other people's opinions, she was not prepared to change her ideas in any way: "I do respect other people's religions... I am willing to listen to other people, but I feel, basically, we were all Catholics at one time and... it's more the pity that they lapsed from our faith, for maybe good reasons, but basically we should all be Catholic and there's nothing in our religion that I want to give up." ("No Surrender!" seems to be a Catholic slogan as well as a Protestant one.)

The above examples of Catholic "thought" clearly illustrate the harmful effects of religious belief. The Catholic church and the Orange Lodge are very good at producing ignorant, docile and fervently religious wage-slaves, and so long as workers remain in these organisations so long will they neglect to deal with the cause of their poverty.

A leaflet, issued by the Orange Lodge in protest against this month's Papal visit and the Catholic Church's insistence on having its own schools, declares: "As absolute ruler of the Roman Church, Pope John Paul II bears the ultimate responsibility for this disgraceful school 'apartheid'" (Leaflet: *Why Should We Welcome This Man? - He is no Friend of Ours*). But responsibility for this lies with those workers who believe the superstitious twaddle preached by the Pope and who therefore find it necessary to obey his instructions to send their children to schools which specialise in the Catholic form of indoctrination. The Protestant variety of religious indoctrination is carried out, not only by their churches and the state schools, but by the juvenile section of the Orange Lodge.



Nuns at their devotions

Pastor Jack Glass (who thinks even Ian Paisley is "pro-romanist") also sees the Pope's visit as a major problem, so much so that he stood in the recent Hillhead by-election as the candidate for the Protestant Crusade Against the Papal Visit (388 votes—lost deposit). Another group of religious maniacs has been holding a series of meetings with titles such as "The Papal Visit Examined Doctrinally; the Papal Visit Examined Politically" (*Glasgow Evening Times*, 6 March 1982). They say: "Does not the sacrifice of our martyred forefathers suffer a grave insult by the permitting of the Pope to come...". On March 24, in Bellahouston Park, about 20 Protestants tried to prevent the uprooting of some trees for the Pope's visit and one woman was arrested while trying to chain herself to a tree. It is most regrettable that so many members of the working class consider it worthwhile to waste so much of their time. It is also regrettable that so many others are eager to see the Pope and will pay £5.00 each to hear his inane incantations.

Socialists hope that the Pope's visit will fail; we hope the lapsed will stay away from church and that believers will continue to decrease in number. There are no reasonable grounds for belief in the supernatural, or in gods, just as there are no grounds for belief in the existence of pink elephants, leprechauns, fairies or flying pigs. Socialists actively oppose all forms of religious superstition not only because such beliefs are unscientific and act as a barrier to understanding the society in which we live and its historical development, but also because of the socially divisive nature of religion. Workers who suffer from the delusions of religion are prepared to kill their fellow-workers in time of war; there are churches in America where blacks are not allowed; women are often considered subordinate to men and the Catholic Church will neither allow its women to become priests nor decide how many children they will have (although many Catholics now ignore the Pope's ruling on the latter).

The Catholic Church, with its roots in feudalism and its still feudal structure, has adapted very well to capitalism. It has shareholdings in many major companies throughout the world including those producing armaments. Nowadays the Vatican is a major financial institution and it is not surprising that the Pope is such a vehement supporter of capitalism. Only three years ago Pope John II warned his priests in South America against a too injudicious support of workers and peasants in their struggles against poverty.

Had not the Catholic Church an appalling record as a force against social progress, were not the Pope a pedlar of reactionary views and religious nonsense, socialists would still not welcome him. Like his opponents in the Orange Lodge, he is no friend of ours.

JOHNNY CADILLAC

THE FALKLANDS CRISIS

In face of the imminent threat of war over the potential wealth of the Falkland Islands the Socialist Party of Great Britain affirms:

- 1 That despite the wave of jingoistic hysteria in the press and its endorsement by Labour and Tory politicians alike, no working class interests in Britain, Argentina or the Falklands themselves can be served by war.
- 2 That neither the military junta in Buenos Aires nor the elected representatives of British capitalism, least of all the business interests of Coalite-Charringtons, can justify the shedding of a single drop of working class blood.
- 3 That the new-found outrage at the undemocratic and oppressive nature of the Argentine regime rings false coming from a government which was arming that regime until the eve of hostilities.
- 4 That the crucial role of Argentine capitalism in profitably making-up the notorious shortfall of agricultural production within the Russian Empire goes far to explain the support given to the junta by the local "Communist Party" and the muted criticism of it by the same circles who so vociferously denounce the similar dictatorship in Chile and its parallel suppression of trade unionism and free speech.

We therefore reiterate that having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow-workers of all lands the expression of goodwill and socialist fraternity and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism in all its guises and the establishment of socialism throughout the world, the only way to end war.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

13 April 1982

Doing the bulldog thing

Some said it was war, to others it was more like comic opera. Most people's knowledge of the Falkland Islands was limited to what they had read in their stamp album but they were sure that it was a place worth defending against a vile foreign dictatorship. The Argentinians were rather better known, since their football team was once called "animals" by the then England team manager Alf Ramsey, who was not averse to including one or two cloggers in his own side.

The British fleet which was despatched to deal a mighty blow at the invaders of the Falklands sailed out of Portsmouth trying not to look as if it was redundant. It was led by two aircraft carriers, one of which will be sold to the Australian Navy and the other scrapped. Five hundred of the sailors preparing for battle had had notices of redundancy and so had 180 of the workers in the Portsmouth dockyards where the ships were made ready. Among the crew was Prince Andrew ("a serving officer like anyone else") who truly is redundant but gets paid handsomely for it and who seemed liable to fly an expensive helicopter into battle. It was in a rather desperate patriotism, that thousands of workers waved the fleet away: "We have to do the bulldog thing" urged the wife of one of the sailors, perhaps reasoning that a dead dog is better off than a live unemployed sailor.

There was too some bellicose relief.

Capitalist powers devote an enormous amount of resources to training their people in how to kill other workers in a war. Servicemen are liable to become frustrated, if all their expensive training and equipment is allowed to atrophy for want of the nourishment of a nice, destructive war. So the *Guardian* could report: "The men, with their planes and missiles are, after years of war games, spoiling for the real thing". There was also some relief at the sudden emergence of this external "enemy", who are always useful in helping persuade workers to accept sacrifices. And sacrifices, as the dole queues get longer and prices rise and rise, are what British capitalism wants from its workers right now.

The government's acute discomfort at the "humiliating affront to this country" (the departing Lord Carrington's description) was in large part due to the fact that they had based a lot of their electoral appeal on the promise to be strong on "defence". Was the Iron Lady to be foxed by a bunch of gibbering foreigners who spend all their time turning out cans of poisoned corned beef? Would the Tories ever live it down? There was much praise and sympathy for the hugely suave, hugely wealthy, Lord Carrington. Even American Secretary of State Alexander Haig had a good word to say for him, forgetting that only recently he called him a "duplicitous bastard".



Jingoism rules—in Portsmouth...

Carrington didn't need sympathy; he retired in good order to his acres in Buckinghamshire, a green and pleasant county of which he owns a substantial amount.

There was nothing comic about the Labour Party's nauseous frenzy to exploit the situation. It was almost as if a general election had already been called. In the Commons on March 30, Denis Healey accused the government of being "caught with its trousers down in the South Atlantic"—a phrase for the connoisseurs of Healeyisms. Callaghan, pretending to be helpful, recounted how much better the interests of British capitalism had been looked after when he was responsible. In 1977, he claimed, there was a similar crisis but the Labour government resolved it secretly, with a combination of military threat and diplomatic pressure. No MP took Callaghan's trousers down by asking why the leader of a party which once claimed to stand for international working class interests should be fishing in the murky waters of capitalist diplomacy. In fact, Carrington had been following the same policy—on this issue, as on others, there is no difference between Tories and Labour—but his bad luck was that the Argentinian rulers were under pressure to call his bluff and the whole thing was played out in public.

Of course the real star of the Labour benches was Michael Foot. Belying his reputation as a doddering, ineffectual bungler, the Labour leader lashed the government for their "betrayal of those who looked to it for protection" (he was not talking about workers struggling to live on social security). "We should not," he raged, "see foul, brutal aggression successful in our world." (He was not attacking the record of past Labour governments on Korea, Malaysia, Biafra, Vietnam...) Foot's speech was applauded by the MPs as a flag-waving, drum banging demand for war in which, of

course, he would not personally be in the front line. It was, we remember, only a few months ago that he won an affectionate ovation at a Labour Party gathering by describing himself as "an inveterate peacemaker".

Many Tory MPs were delighted with Foot's performance; one sure way of winning their respect is to make a speech calling for workers to be sent off to war. One of the more effusive—or perhaps he had merely lunched well—gurgled, "For once, you truly spoke for Britain". There was no report that Foot so much as blushed at this insulting compliment (a few days later he was calling himself "an international democratic socialist"), nor that he was perturbed by Labour MP George Foulkes' warning that "Inevitably thousands of British troops will be killed". The Labour Party has never flinched from the prospect of workers dying in the conflicts to protect their masters' interests, especially if an inveterate votes-monger like Foot may be able to translate their deaths into an election win.

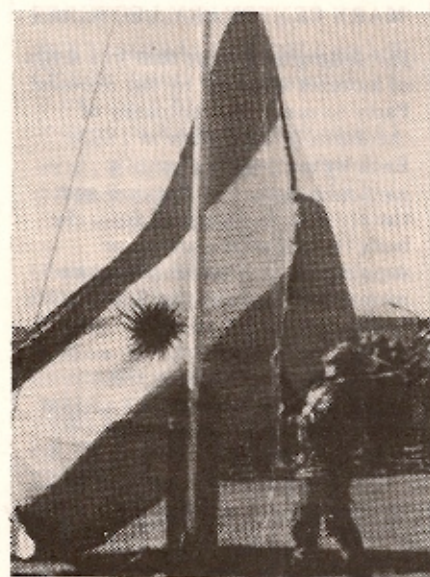
The Conservatives, also worried about their political standing, simply tried to shelter in a measure of fantasy. Thatcher declared:

The Falkland Islands and their dependencies remain British territory... It is the government's objective to see that the Islands are freed from occupation and returned to British administration at the earliest possible moment.

But in the reality of world capitalism 1982, places like the Falklands are not defensible by any available British force for any length of time. British foreign policy has been based on that reality for some time now. In historical fact the "British administration" of the Islands was itself an "occupation". The British settlement of the Falklands was contested, by France, Spain and Argentina, from the latter half of the 18th century. The Spanish were there until 1806, when

the Argentinians threw them out and in 1833 a British force arrived and, politely but firmly, ejected the Argentinians. The Prime Minister of the day made it plain that the British ruling class would not allow "... any other state to exercise a right as derived from Spain, which Britain had denied to Spain herself". This has never been accepted by any Argentinian government and, at the very least, they have registered an annual protest. Children there are taught about the perfidy of the British over the Falklands, rather as British children have been taught about the Germans, French, Japanese, Argentinians,...

In 1851 a Royal Charter—the official sanction to the exploitation of the resources and the people—was granted to the Falkland Islands Company and since then the Islands' economy has been dominated by that company. The FIC owns nearly half the land, a third of the sheep (wool is the Islands' only product of any significance) and employs over one sixth of the population. It controls the bank, the dock and the supermarket. In 1972, after a brief spell of ownership by an offshoot of Slater Walker, the FIC was taken over by Charrington Industrial Holdings, which has big interests in fuel distribution and was probably attracted by the FIC stake in the Islands' transport and warehousing and the possible presence of oil. Argentinian investors almost pulled off a stealthy take-over in 1977 but this was thwarted, partly by the Foreign Office. Charrington seemed shaken by the experience, and declared that they would never sell out to a foreign concern. Soon afterwards they were themselves taken over by Coalite, a company based in Derbyshire. Through all these machinations the workers of the Falklands plodded on, in the bare, windswept landscape, raising sheep and turning out the surplus value for whichever bunch of capitalists was appropriating the wealth they had produced.



... and in Port Stanley



Those workers are in the main descendants of the Scottish, English and Welsh who went to the Falklands after 1851. Most families are tenants of the FIC and live in tied cottages which they must leave when they are too old to be exploitable any longer. Until recently the majority of members of the Legislative Council was nominated by the British government. If the Falklanders prefer this kind of feudal paternalism it can only be because they think—with good reason—that life under Argentinian military rule has even less to offer them. A final irony is that, if any of them tries to take refuge in Britain they will have no automatic right of entry. The Foreign Office has promised them special concessions but, although they hold British passports, they are legally excluded because they are defined as non-patrials under the 1971 Immigration Act.

Behind the feigned concern for the fate of the Falklanders is the fact that for a long time it has been British policy, under Labour and Conservative governments, to phase the Islands over to Argentinian rule. As James Callaghan pointed out in the Commons on April 7, in a brief respite from his jingoism, there had already been negotiations about the British hold over the Falklands, which

might have led to some sort of leaseback arrangement with Argentina. In 1971 a commercial agreement gave Argentina a near monopoly in fuel supply and air travel and the first big runway at Port Stanley was Argentinian built. The Director General of the Falkland Islands Office in London had this to say, about the British attitude to their efforts to resist this trend: "We have consistently not been getting sufficient support from the Foreign Office these last twelve years".

Naturally a lot of publicity was given by the British media to the transparent cynicism behind the invasion. Argentina is another country in the grip of a severe recession. At the end of March a trade union demonstration against the effects of unemployment and rising prices brought some of the worst civil disorder since the military took over in 1976. But the move against the Falklands brought a miraculous change; patriotic frenzy swamped the reality of the workers' parlous condition and of the murderous repression by which the Argentinian rulers defend their position. As the news came through there was another demonstration but this time the Argentinian workers were chanting support for Galtieri and his annexation of *Los Islas Malvinas*.

The hysteria and deception on both sides ensure that it will take a long time to purge the Falklands crisis of historical myth. It will be written up as an affair of honour; the Argentinians will describe it as a blow against foreign imperialism and the British as a defence of human rights. But the wars of capitalism have never protected human rights; in truth they have damaged those rights, at times destroyed them. Diplomacy—one of the practised arts of the capitalist system—cannot be an affair of honour; it must function by double-cross, concealment, treachery and lies.

So British and Argentinian servicemen went across the ocean to do battle with each other in their masters' cause. It was another doleful example of ignorant workers being easily duped by the empty jingoism of desperate politicians. Animals do it better; at least they don't take themselves willingly to the slaughterhouse.

IVAN

Running Commentary

Peace in our time

Violence, mayhem and murder are essential features of today's social structure. Yet, we are frequently encouraged to believe that we live in a generally peaceful society which is only spoilt from time to time by erratic outbursts of barbarity. So, while the number of people who perish from starvation is equivalent to one Hiroshima every three days, the picture of the world we receive from, for instance, the newspapers is one in which things are all right except for a "Policeman Killed in Bolton" or "Street Disorders in Toxteth".

By the same token, the propaganda of groups like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is deceptive because it tries to concentrate anxiety and horror of violence solely against particular instruments of violence rather than the reasons for organised violence being used. Even without Pershing missiles, the SS 20's, Trident and Polaris, society organised on the basis of private property would still be torn with aggression.



Last month the number of people around the world who were involved in wars of the old-fashioned death-producing kind came to about 701,600,000. (*Sunday Times*, 21/3/82.) This figure represents about one person in six across the face of the globe and embraces forces not all that short of those taking part in the Second World War.

But we are assured by smiling politicians, priests and teachers that we are now enjoying "peacetime". The figure of over 700 million who are involved in wars is most probably an underestimate, as the Foreign Editor of the *Sunday*

MARX CENTENARY LECTURES

The following are the first in a series of lectures arranged by the Socialist Party to mark the centenary of the death of Karl Marx in 1883. Each lecture will deal with a particular aspect of Marxism and the series as a whole will form the basis for a special issue of, or supplement to next March's commemorative issue of the *Socialist Standard*.

Saturday 1 May, 7.30
MARXISM AND MONETARISM
Speaker: E. Hardy

Saturday 29 May, 7.30
MARX AND INCREASING MISERY
Speaker: J. D'Arcy

52 Clapham High Street
London SW4

Times observed, "... when the battleground is effectively sealed off, as in East Timor, there is always a risk of losing a few tens of thousands through unreported genocide".

Across the world people are taking part in organised brutality: in Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Philippines, Angola, Iraq and Iran, the Spanish Sahara, Kampuchea and Chad. And now, spokesmen for British capitalism like John Nott and Michael Foot (who one Tory MP described as truly "speaking for England" in a recent parliamentary debate on the crisis of the Falkland Islands) are busy stirring up nationalistic sentiments in preparation for the possibility of members of the working class in Britain being ordered to go and murder our counterparts from the Argentine.

For the havoc of war to continue, a majority of people must remain gullible to the fallacious ideas that we are naturally aggressive and that we better our condition by fighting the battles of our rulers. Socialists reject these fallacious beliefs and organise for a society of human co-operation.

A place of his own

Good news for the homeless is that there is a desirable property down in Kent going for a bargain price. It would suit the larger family, whose children are doing fine arts or history at school. Plenty of space for outdoor activities and for leisure time socialising. Sounds good.

Hever Castle, in the lush countryside around Edenbridge, includes 3,145 acres of farms, houses, a pub and woodlands. The Castle itself has an abundance of priceless works of art and historical knick-knacks like a Milanese suit of armour made for Henry II of France, worth about £600,000.

The owner of this lot, Lord Astor of Hever, shrinks from the prospect of developing the "commercial" side of the estate in order to remain solvent. Since 1963 he has graciously allowed workers to pay to shuffle round and admire bits of the estate, which was anyway built from their exploitation. Farther than that he was not prepared to go.

Aristocrats are, after all, supposed to be above such sordid worldly preoccupations as making money. "Here 64 years ago I learned to walk. Here too I learned my ABC. Here too are buried my father and mother" lamented Astor to the reporters who hurried down to Hever when the plans for the sale were leaked to the press.

But the Lord is in even worse plight. When Hever is sold he must take refuge at his other home in Scotland. With over 14,000 acres this is even bigger than Hever but the house has dry rot and in April it was still snowing there.

Workers who are thinking about making a mortgage application to buy Hever had better check on the price. So had those who feel sorry for the homeless

Lord Astor. Including the contents, the place is likely to go for about £14 million. And that's a bargain price. The estate agents have not evaluated the misery and stress of the exploitation which went into every square inch of it.

Cleric's tale

Who noticed that Billy Graham—who prefers to be known as *Doctor Billy*—has recently been over here on another crusade to convert us all to religion? Gone are the days of overkill publicity and mass hysteria in his meetings. Now our Billy is just another god-banger trying to smooth over the inconsistencies in his propaganda.

Interviewed on the Radio 4 programme *Sunday* a couple of days before the start of this latest campaign, Graham tried sweetly to unhitch himself from the "Moral Majority" movement, saying that it is not a religious organisation but a political one. He also said that "Moral Majority" accepts people who are not necessarily Christians—some Jews, even atheists.



Well most of the spokesmen for "Moral Majority" claim to be Christians—Born Again Christians, no less—and in 1980 were strong supporters of Ronald Reagan (who also thinks he's born again, which must be nice for everyone). Perhaps this association with an increasingly unpopular president is what Graham is really trying to separate himself from.

Graham gloomily forecast a nuclear catastrophe in as little as five years, unless the nations of capitalism (which is not how he put it) lay down their nuclear weapons. During his thirty-odd years as an evangelist nuclear weapons have increased vastly in number and power of destruction. Yet Graham has been silent on the matter, except to hint that American nuclear weapons were not too bad because they kept at bay the evils of "communism"—by which he means the

Russian bloc of capitalist powers. Has born-again-Billy had a change of heart, then? We've got five years to find out.

On the same day that Graham was being interviewed, another—but rather different—cleric was having his say on television. Don Cupitt, author of *Taking Leave of God*, is no pulpit-pounding believer in the divinity of Christ, the infallibility of the Bible or of life after death. That doesn't leave much for him to believe in; Cupitt manages it by accepting most of the advances of scientific knowledge into areas formerly explained in religious terms and then re-organising his faith to fit in with what's left. And that amounts to little more than an indwelling concept of God and a selection of quotes attributed to Jesus as "a guide for living".

Clearly, Cupitt and Graham have a theological difference, which shows up as a choice between stubbornly holding fast to discredited ideas—and so becoming even more alienated from people at the intellectual sharp end of capitalist society—or of altering basic religious concepts to the point at which they virtually disappear. And that shows up that religion, whether of the conservative-born-again, or the swinging age of technology, variety is a denial of reality and a hindrance to anyone concerned with building a better world out of that reality.

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Alternative Economic Strategy or Socialism

The current crisis of British capitalism has clearly demonstrated the failure of the strategy which had dominated government policies (both Labour and Conservative) since the end of the Second World War: to manage the economy for continued growth, and a steady expansion in the social and welfare services. The capitalist propagandists insisted that Keynesian policies had cracked capitalism's biggest problem. The period of cyclical crises during which there were attacks on working class living standards had, at last, come to an end. It was, they said, uphill all the way. Ideologies (by which they meant Marxism) were a thing of the past.

Since the late 1960s, however, it has become widely accepted that Keynesian policies were not the reason for the post-war economic boom. Rather, government policies (Labour and Conservative) were riding the crest of the economic wave. It was not that government policies were controlling the economy; that was a mere illusion. On the contrary, it was only because of the economic boom that governments were able to pursue their Keynesian policies of increased state intervention. As the economic wave came crashing down, governmental attempts to bale out the economy by more and more state spending became increasingly frantic. They found that the Keynesian bucket was full of holes. The Conservative Party, in particular after the failure of the Heath government, ditched its allegiance to Keynesianism and publicly declared its conversion to what it called "monetarism". The monetarists had a religious faith in the ability of "market forces" to direct capital to where it was most profitable. Also, they believed that this policy of allowing the "invisible hand" of the market to hold sway would result in benefits to the working class as well as the capitalists.

The Labour Party did not at first reject its Keynesian past. In 1974, Harold Wilson led them into government with a so-called radical manifesto of policies intended to bring about "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families". But the Labour government did nothing of the kind. Instead, the rich got richer, and it was the working class instead of the rich who were "squeezed until the pips squeak". The Labour government imposed severe austerity measures upon workers and their families. These, we were told, were because of economic necessity. Once again, as during the 1964-1970 government, Labour had been "blown off course". In response to the deepening crisis, the government cut welfare and education services and, with the collaboration of the TUC, imposed a

"voluntary" wages policy which resulted in a fall in real wages. The aim of these policies was to increase the level of profits kept by the capitalists for the accumulation of capital, and to reduce the proportion of profits spent on the reproduction of labour.

Since its defeat in the 1979 election, a debate has been going on within the Labour Party as to whether its programme in office was the appropriate one, and what it will offer the working class at the next election. A large number of Labour Party members and supporters, who view the last Labour government's policies as a betrayal by the leadership of genuine socialist policies, have increasingly been talking about an Alternative Economic Strategy (AES). Although there is more than one version of the AES it will, whatever its form, be the main plank of Labour Party and left-wing propaganda in the run-up to the next election.



"There is no alternative to a black future."

The aims of the AES

The AES seeks to get British capitalism out of its present crisis whilst at the same

time meeting what are considered to be the immediate needs of the working class, and to weaken the role of the profit motive in production. This is seen as providing a platform for a "socialist transformation of Britain". Thus, the AES is not viewed as a programme that will in itself create a socialist society, but as "a strategy that can win tangible gains in the form of greater working class control over production. Moreover, rather than pursue such gains within the constraints imposed by the existing structure of economic relations, it seeks constantly to anticipate, challenge and progressively dismantle those constraints and substitute new forms of control" (Conference of Socialist Economists London Working Group, *The Alternative Economic Strategy*, CSE/Labour Co-ordinating Committee, 1980, p. 7; hereafter referred to as CSE). All that lies beneath this veil of words, however, is yet another attempt by the Labour Party and its left-wing followers to pass off reforms of capitalism as socialism.

Adopting a radical Keynesian stance in opposition to the "monetarism" of the Conservatives, the AES proposes a massive increase in government spending (figures range from £6,000,000,000 to £16,000,000,000, depending on which version of the AES one reads). The argument is that it is the lack of investment which is at the root of the crisis. Capitalists, according to the left-wing, prefer to invest in property and in foreign countries (in 1980, £7,000,000,000 was invested abroad) and to indulge in conspicuous consumption. The blame for the crisis is put at the door of traditional Labour Party bogies: the City, financiers, currency speculators, foreign multinationals, the IMF, and so on. It is the inability of these institutions to invest in Britain on their own accord which necessitates their being brought under control of the nation. The interests of these individual institutions is in opposition to the interests of Britain as an economic unit distinct from other national units. Aaronovitch has stated: "The dominant forces of capital and government have sacrificed the productive base of the British economy at all critical stages (except for world wars). This has been in striking contrast with, for instance, the policies of the ruling groups of those of our main rivals who have grown faster" (Aaronovitch, *The Road From Thatcherism*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1981, p. 5). In other words, the Labour Party is saving British capitalism from the capitalists!

Previous attempts by Conservative and Labour governments to induce industrial growth have been based on generating increased demand in the economy through such measures as increased government spending and lower taxation.



Voting for their alternative

It was believed that to meet this increase in demand there would be a corresponding increase in industrial production. However, this did not happen. In order to ensure that production does increase to match demand, the AES includes policies which directly intervene in production.

The main means to achieve this is through planning agreements, based on a five-year plan, but negotiated every year with private enterprises. These will involve decisions on "investment levels and location, employment, price policy and the like" (CSE, p. 71), and would be negotiated between "management and government with trade unions playing an important role" (CSE, p. 71). These various planning agreements will be co-ordinated by a National Planning Commission. To ensure that the agreements will be fulfilled, the government will have the power to enforce a range of sanctions against both capitalists and trades unions. The ultimate sanction would be the nationalisation of the enterprise, which would give "a 50:50 sharing of control between labour and capital" (Labour Co-ordinating Committee, *There Is An Alternative*, Labour Co-ordinating Committee, 1980, p. 14).

Another important part of the AES is the proposal to ensure that finance will be available for investment. This is to be achieved through state control of the major financial institutions. The capitalists, it seems, are unable to do this by themselves. A future Labour government will utilise the pension and insurance funds as well as the revenue from North Sea oil through a National Investment Bank, comprising government, capitalist, and trades union directors. Also, there are plans to nationalise the four major Clearing Banks (Barclays, Lloyds, Midland, Natwest), and to create a State

Bank through the merging of the Bank of England and the National Savings Bank and the Girobank. These re-formed financial institutions would provide credit to industry at more favourable rates than at present. Finally, there is a proposal for an Investment Reserve Fund through which a proportion of pre-tax profits would be used for specific schemes.

According to the left-wing, the crisis is a product of Tory policies, precipitated to bring about a weakening of the industrial power of the working class. This it has achieved through allowing the "laws" of the free-market to operate unfettered. As the left-wing sees it, to overcome the present crisis and prevent a future one, requires that the market forces be tamed and brought under state control: "an essential part of the industrial strategy is to reduce the role of profit in the economy, both as a source of funds to finance investment and as a criterion that determines where investment should or should not be made" (CSE, p. 45). The policies mentioned above are supposed to achieve this. But the hope that the role of profit can be reduced is vain. The disastrous economies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are examples of this.

Operating in a world economy in which capital flows between nations, capital is invested where it produces the highest profit. If the return on capital were lower in Britain than in other nations, capital would not be invested. If the AES were implemented foreign capital would not be invested. Furthermore, British capital would be exported to an even greater extent than at present. Any attempt to prevent the export of capital would not ensure that it was invested in Britain. Instead, it would not be invested at all. Only complete state ownership would ensure the use of this "idle" capital. Whatever policies were attempted, the likely result would be a further decline in industrial output.

In talking of reducing the role of the market, all that is meant is that there will be increased attempts at planning, and a reduction in the role of the profit criterion. It does not mean the end of production for a market in which independent producers attempt to sell their products. It does not mean the replacement of production for profit by production for need. On the contrary, the supporters of the AES are opposed to production for need: "Production only creates jobs if the products can be sold. Production for use is nothing more than a romantic fantasy unless there is some way of transforming social needs into effective demand..." (CSE, p. 50). Not even the most avowed supporter of capitalism would object to this Labour Party "socialism".

Import controls

The Alternative Economic Strategy is not merely a national programme. It also has international implications. During the period of industrial re-structuring, British capitalists' interests will have to be pro-

tected from "unfair" foreign competition, and the flooding of the British home market by cheaper imports. This flooding would have a disastrous effect on the embryonic British industries, which would be unable to sell their products even in the home market. This would mean that they would be unable to earn the profits necessary to invest in new productive plant, resulting in a further decline in competitiveness. To ensure that the new British industries are not aborted, the AES plans to nurture them behind a trade barrier. This would allow British capitalism a breathing space in which industries are tooled-up with the most advanced technology, and labour productivity increased (that is, the level of exploitation is increased), so that when the process has been completed, British capitalism will be better able to compete in the world market. That improved competitiveness is the aim of the AES's call for import controls is made clear in the LCC pamphlet: "What we have to develop is not just a system of import controls to protect the profits of home manufacturers but a system of planned trade which seeks to develop exports" (p. 20).

The AES attempts to link the interests of the working class with the success of British capitalism in its trade war with its rivals. The aim of the import controls is to save "British" jobs by supporting British capitalism against Japanese, French, and German capitalism. To the workers however, it is irrelevant whether they are exploited by British or Japanese capital. This would result in retaliation by other nations, reducing the level of exports and consequently increasing unemployment. Furthermore, since import controls tax imports and force workers to buy more expensive home produced ones, they lead to an increase in the cost of living for the working class. The net result of import controls would be to increase



One of the unemployed, in distress

unemployment among workers abroad, and to whip up hatred of "foreigners". In other words, they would divide the working class of the world. The AES also attempts to reduce the militancy and independence of the British working class by incorporating it into the apparatus of the capitalist state, and reconciling its interests to the fortunes of British imperialism.

It is clear from the programme of the AES that the danger to "Britain" is not capitalism, but the domination of British capital by multinational and foreign capital. How else to explain the emphasis put on the failure of British capital to invest in British industry, and instead invest abroad. Capitalists who fail to invest in Britain are criticised for being "unpatriotic", for not putting their faith in "Britain", and not for being capitalists. Accordingly, the answer to such "unpatriotic" behaviour is for capital to be nationalised or brought under the control of the state.

Workers' control or control of workers?

One of the main points emphasised to sell the AES to the working class is increased worker involvement in decision-making. Supporters of the AES "attach an overriding importance to the extension of workers' power—both at the point of production and within the wider democratic process of arriving at economic and social goals" (CSE, p. 80). They appear to think that if there are workers (for them, the working class consists of the industrial workers and certain kinds of "white-collar" workers, and not all those who sell their labour-power, at whatever price) involved in making decisions about how a particular enterprise will develop, that the profitability criterion will not be so important. But it is already the working class which runs capitalism (although not all workers are involved in decision-making. However, it does not matter whether the decisions are made by capitalists, management-workers, or a combination of shop-floor workers, management-workers, share-holders, and the state. What matters is that they are making decisions in the interest of capital. It is not *who* plays the game which is important, but *what* the rules of the game are to begin with. The rule of capitalism is a simple one: No Profit, No Production. Opening the books, workers' plans, workers' co-operatives, or worker directors will not alter this.

Supporters of the AES fear that a high rate of what they call inflation will threaten the hoped-for expansion of the economy and lead to the abandonment of increased government spending. Ignorantly, they argue that control of inflation requires that workers do not demand high increases in wages. Although there is controversy on the left as to whether there should be a formal incomes policy, there is agreement that wage increases have to be controlled. Aaravitch states that any increase in wages would have to "take into account the overall direction

of the economy" (p. 44). Agreements on wages would attempt to ensure that wages would not fall, and that "consequently growth in real wages would be ensured *except in the circumstances of an uncontrolled fall in the terms of trade*" (CSE, p. 132, emphasis added). In other words, whenever things got bad for British capitalism, the working class would carry the burden as usual. No doubt the attack on the working class would be couched in the familiar terms of "the national interest". If, as some have estimated, 5 million new jobs have to be created for unemployment to fall to the level of the 1960s, the Labour government, with the support of the TUC, would argue that this can be achieved only through wage restraint. Another ploy would be to make increased involvement in decision-making dependent on wage restraint. However, the experience of the last Labour government showed that "non-monetary" gains do not impress the workers in the face of reductions in living standards. As an example of a monetary compensation for wage restraint, Michael Meacher MP suggested recently: "This could be either government repayment, after say three-five years, of a proportion of workers' income tax as index-linked savings according to the degree of pay restraint, or better still, once planning agreements were in place, a right to share in the firm's capital appreciation tomorrow to match pay limitation today" (*New Statesman*, 14 August, 1981). But workers' experience shows that such deals are not in their interests.

The socialist alternative

The AES is a bridge to state capitalism, not socialism. State capitalism is no more in the interests of the working class than free-enterprise capitalism. The state control of capital would strengthen the power of capital over the working class.

Socialists are not concerned solely with the standard of living of the working class and increased involvement in decision-making. Our opposition to capitalism strikes at the very root of the working class condition: the need to sell our ability to work to those who own and control the means of production and distribution. The only way to ensure that the interests of the working class are fulfilled is through the abolition of the working class itself. Indeed, the working class is a class whose interests are destined never to be fulfilled. This does not mean that it must give up the struggle to improve its conditions. That would be a disastrous course of action. What it does mean, however, is that in the struggle to improve its conditions, the working class will come up against the limitations of what can be achieved under capitalism. They will necessarily confront the conditions of their existence as a class. This leaves two courses of action open to the working class. First, it can work within the limitations of capitalism to obtain what it can. But the history of the working class shows that this is precious

little, and there is no reason to believe that the future will hold anything different. Or it can take the second course of action: to confront the class limitations with the determination to break them down. To abolish the condition which creates and recreates the working class: the ownership of the means of production and distribution by the capitalist class.

A reformist accommodation to capitalism's problems, disguised as an embattled militancy, not only puts off the time when capitalism will be replaced by socialism, but also postpones the discussion of why only socialism is the solution to the problems confronting the working class. But the reformist argues that something has to be done now! If this or that problem can at least be ameliorated, then this is a worthwhile goal; they cannot wait for socialism to provide a solution. When challenged to give an example of a solution to a working class problem, the reformists will be at a loss. They will even go so far as to agree with the socialist that capitalism has no solutions. But, they will retort, at least a reform will ensure that fewer people are suffering from this or that problem: something is better than nothing, isn't it? There is a gaping hole in this argument. The justification for supporting reformist proposals is the comparison of the position before and after the reform. Before the reform, there are, say, 60,000 people living in stinking, rotten houses, whereas after the reform there are hoped to be a mere 40,000. How could the socialist deny support for the reform? Not to support it would condemn 20,000 more people to living in stinking, rotten houses than need be.

But socialists, in not supporting the reformist programme, are not advocating that nothing be done. Far from it. We are calling for the working class to unite to introduce socialism now. In comparison with living conditions possible in a socialist society, the reformist changes are bloody disaster for the working class. The choice for the working class is not between Reform or Nothing. It is Reform or Revolution.

CARDIFF GROUP

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WORLD WITHOUT WAGES (MONEY, POVERTY AND WAR!)

by
Sam Leight

Copies of this new book, written by a member of the World Socialist Party of the United States, are now available from SPGB, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4
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POLITICAL NOTES

Some win, some lose

It may have escaped attention—because in the shocked aftermath no one was admitting to defeat—but it was the Social Democratic candidate who won the Hillhead by-election.

The Tories congratulated themselves on losing so few votes and on coming second after nearly three years of rescuing us all with their unpopular policies. The Labour Party, in a process which would have done credit to the most hardened wrangler, found solace in their discovery that more Hillhead voters had deserted the Tories for the SDP than they had Labour.

Naturally, the spokespeople for these parties could not be expected to face the fact that the voters rejected them because they had failed so wretchedly to live up to their promises. They came to power trailing glorious visions of prosperity, justice, freedom . . . They lose power miserably in their impotence and squabbling among themselves about who among them bears the major responsibility for their defeat.

The working class, who at elections vote to continue the experience that life under capitalism is a daily struggle, understand so little of their class position and interests that they turn from one discredited futility to the other—then back again.

Many of them are now deceived into thinking that the SDP/Liberal Alliance offers something radically different from the outworn nostrums of the Labour and Tory parties. What the SDP offers is no more than a rehash of the programmes and the personalities of those other parties. There is no reason to believe that they will succeed where the others have failed; their character is basically the same—a prescription for failure, despair and defeat.

Hillhead was no cause for rejoicing. Capitalism grinds on. Whoever won, for working class interests it was another defeat.

Good news for some

Good news for the government: the number of people claiming Supplementary Benefit has reached a record 4 million, with the *Guardian* (23/3/82) estimating that the number on the poverty line (which would more accurately be named the destitution line) is around 6 million.

Supplementary Benefit was originally considered, in those long gone days when Beveridge was readjusting working class poverty and calling it prosperity, as an emergency fall back for a few, particularly unfortunate workers. In theory, the other benefits which could be claimed "as

of right" were in almost every case enough to eliminate need.

The change in this—and in the rise in the numbers on Supplementary Benefit—is due to developments like the growth in long term unemployed and the ending of earnings related benefits, which served to keep many claimants above the theoretical supplementary level.

Thus do some "reforms", plus the inexorable anarchy of capitalism, undermine others and expose their general impotence. Tory MP Peter Bottomley has wailed: "... the Supplementary Benefits system is falling apart. . ."

But perhaps some ministers will welcome this as good news because one of their theories, often expounded by the likes of Norman Tebbit and Keith Joseph, is that British capitalism will best thrive if workers' incomes are kept as low as possible; then they will be pricing themselves into jobs. And incomes could not be much lower than Supplementary Benefit.

Even on their own assumptions, the "low wages equals competitive, profitable industry" argument is not valid. Of course the problem for the government is that those 4 million claimants are not getting wages; they're not employed, not turning out commodities to be sold and to realise profit. It is a symbol of government's impotence, that try as they might, they can do nothing about that either.

If there were signs that the working class, in or out of jobs, were beginning to see that—now there would be good news indeed.

Gang of Another Four

Admirers of Jenkins, Williams, Owen and Rodgers will not welcome the emergence of another Gang of Four; in fact they will probably find it positively embarrassing. But it makes an interesting story.

It is all happening in Islington, in London, where a short time ago there was a mass defection of councillors from the Labour Party to the SDP which gave the SDP control over the council. For some time before this, the Labour Party in Islington had been notorious for its

Tammany-style of operations about which, perhaps in the interests of clinging leech-like to office, the Labour Party at large did nothing significant. So there may have been some relief among their members, when the Labour leeches on the council transferred their attention to another body.

Now the blood is beginning to flow from the SDP. The national party has expelled four of the Islington councillors who recently prevented the council settling the new rates by leaving the chamber before the vote was taken. Thus mucking about with the financial juggling of the little bit of capitalism called Islington was a grave offence.

This new Gang of Four responded by deciding to stand at the coming local elections as *Independent Social Democrats*, although they had in any case already been rejected as candidates by the local SDP branch. This was another grave offence so the Four had to go.

Such brawls are not uncommon in the cockpit of capitalist politics. Members of capitalist parties are elected to office by workers who, ignorant of the realities of the social system, accept their pledges to be able to improve things like housing and local and social services.

When the economic laws of capitalism intrude into this delusion, and the election promises are exposed, the party comes under stress, which often results in recriminations, splits, expulsions.

The SDP promised that, in breaking the mould of traditional politics, they would not experience this. Now they are themselves exposing this myth, showing that they are basically no different from the parties they split from.

And all this, mark you, before they have any agreed policies. Whatever will happen, we might ask, when the great day arrives and the SDP actually stand for something other than vague pomposities?

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Original Gang of Four—they are not embarrassed?

A visit from times past

Having nothing but hostility to pomp, superstition and market-place morality, the Socialist Party of Great Britain views the welcoming celebrations for the visit of Pope John Paul II as nothing more or less than a reflection of the ignorance of the religiously stupefied. Everything that the Pope represents, socialists oppose; everything that socialists seek to change, the advocates of religion need to preserve. We stand for human action within the material world—they stand for the passivity of faith within a world controlled by a mythically omnipotent, super-human deity. Respect for the leaders of religion—be they popes, ayatollahs, gurus or rabbis—reflects a pathetic lack of appreciation of the potentialities of humanity.

Christianity developed in an age of mass ignorance of human and environmental evolution. In the second century the Church of Rome emerged, originally as a movement of ideological dissent against the imperial ruling class of its day. (See Karl Kautsky's *Foundations of Christianity*, parts II and IV.) The new religion was adopted by the aspirant rulers of the fourth century, and it was they who ensured the power of the bishops and the unchallengeable nature of the Christian dogma. In the year AD 378 Theodosius became Roman Emperor and enacted a Christian monopoly on state propaganda (previously there had been a religious battle going on between the Roman Church and the advocates of Mithraism—sun worship); later the Emperor Gratian appointed the Bishop of Rome and his successors as the official religious leaders of the Western Empire, that is, Western Europe and North Africa. The role of the Bishop of Rome (or Pope) was to direct the religious development of the Empire in line with the political interests of the new Roman ruling class, to appoint a network of agents to spread the message, and to punish members of the oppressed class who stepped out of line. In short, the role of the Popes in classical antiquity was not unlike that of the Director General of the BBC today.

Popes have done much to protect the interests of the ruling class. The cohesion of feudal Europe owed much to the power of the papacy, which gave the seal of sanctity to the dictatorship of the land-owning barons. It was only when some states began to consider the possibility of taking over the job of organising their own ideological propaganda that the political struggle known as the Reformation occurred. The Reformation did not kill off the Roman Church, although it was clearly weakened and had to adapt itself to the moral needs of the new capitalist property relationships. In the late nineteenth century it was Pope Leo XIII who issued the Encyclical Letters which aimed to provide theological



Anti-Catholic Gordon Riots, 1780

justification for the policy of reforming capitalism. For example, in 1891 Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (on the condition of the working class) stated that the Roman Church was opposed both to "godless communism" and to "the excesses of capitalism". Instead, the letter urged a humanised form of profit system under which men are no longer viciously competitive because they have decided to become good.

The Vatican has played a crucial part in providing support for religiously-based, pro-capitalist reform parties in several European countries; far from being examples of capitalism with a godly expression on its face, they have been no different from any other squalid defender of capitalist exploitation. The Papacy has never been too bothered about the democratic credentials of those capitalist leaders whom it has supported. For example, the Catholic Church supported the Christian Corporate States presided over by Franco in Spain, Salazar in Portugal, Dolfuss and Schunigg in pre-war Austria, Peron in Argentina and Petain in France. The papal relationship with the fascist dictator, Mussolini, was strained, but this did not prevent Pope Pius XI from stating that "Mussolini was the man sent by Providence" (December 20, 1926). In modern times the Pope's role has been to urge workers and peasants to be contented with their lot, to preserve the restrictive economic customs of past ages, to seek crumbs for the poor from the rich man's loaf (charity) and to urge the workers to save our aspirations for another world beyond the clouds.

It is understandable that ignorant Roman slaves believed in the superstitions of religion as a way of explaining the world they lived in. Indeed, even many members of the ruling class of class-

ical antiquity believed their own religious propaganda (just as many modern capitalists now believe theirs). It is even understandable that a few backward peasants in the twentieth century, who have yet to be influenced by scientific knowledge, might listen to the Pope and accept his explanations about the origins and evolution of the world. But here in Britain—an advanced industrial capitalist country with an experienced, relatively educated working class—the mediaeval re-enactment of a papal visit can be seen as a device to push workers backwards into the ideology of ages past. Workers who applaud and worship this affluent travelling trickster are divorcing themselves from the rationalism of modern history. In a bid to set back the ideas of workers, the Church is spending millions of pounds on an exercise designed to divert the majority class in society from looking after its own material here-and-now interests.

The believers may be blind, but the Pope and his mates have got at least one eye open: they know that when all of the religious nonsense has been uttered for public consumption, it is the material world which really matters to them. For example, when the present Pope was shot recently a Vatican medical bulletin reported that "his intestines were gradually resuming their functions and that his heart and blood circulation were good". It is noticeable that the Pope's expert doctors were concerning themselves with such mundane material organs as blood and heart and guts. What would the Pope have said if his doctors had told him that they were going to leave his intestines for another day and in the meantime would be carrying out emergency surgery on his invisible soul? It is also interesting that the Pope is so anxious to be close to his "creator" that on his visit to Britain he will be accompanied by Scotland Yard's D 11 unit—a team of top marksmen who will be standing by to ensure that nobody sends god's representative on earth to visit "that wonderful land in the sky" until he has to go. The Pope leaves the nonsense of christian practice to his deluded followers; he knows now to look after himself.

Workers of the world have no need of Popes or other parasites to speak for us or act for us or tell us how to behave. The gods which we invented in the infancy of our social existence are of no more use to modern society than totem poles or witch-doctors. It was Thomas Hobbes who wrote that "The Papacy is the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting on the grave thereof" (*Leviathan*). That was written in 1651; if papal authority was an anachronism then, it is a thousand times more so now that society has reached a point where humans are the gods, where the universe is ours for the taking, and where history is ours for the making.

STEVE COLEMAN

Russian round table

It was a motley lot that boarded the Aeroflot jet for Moscow on April 13. There was the ex-Life-guardsmen who bragged about sitting on his horse in Whitehall. Then the crazy little Spanish Communist waiter, who rushed around shrieking "These lousy Americans think they peeze da best Pale Ale". The dustman from Reading who had been in the National Front, then the SWP and now organises the CND in the local Conservative club. A lorry driver from Worthing. The daughter of Russian aristocratic exiles, born in China but now living in Sydney, talking more like Barry Humphries. A mixed-up American who was petrified "in case Reagan starts something while I'm still here". Plus two Australian fellow-travellers, a retired Naval Officer, a pleasant young actor from the TV show *Stalky & Co*, a couple of retired teachers—and two members of the SPGB, both with a reasonable command of colloquial Russian.

On reaching Moscow, our guide suddenly informed us that we were invited to a "round-table" discussion about the Soviet Union. The hall originally booked was unavailable and we were switched to the Karl Marx Museum, which gave us the chance to see the exhibits, which are unique. Two "experts" were there to enlighten us—the Russian Editor of *Moscow News* (the English *Soviet Weekly*) and a "sociologist", apparently English. Little did they know that, before they were born, one of the Party members had lived in Moscow and the other had been there as a student.

The proceedings started off quietly enough. We were informed of the Soviet Union's peaceful intentions. "Comrade" Brezhnev's speech to the Russian Trade Union Congress, offering European arms limitation, was quoted. This brought further reference to the Russian Trade Union organisation. We were told it has two hundred million members and of its great achievements in organising production, protecting workers at work, and setting up Sanatoria and Sports Clubs.

The first break came with the question: "How can there be Trade Unions in a socialist society which, by definition, is classless?" This led to a series of "explanations" of the great difficulties Russia had faced, the disastrous effects of the war, the backwardness of parts of the economy, especially agriculture, and so on. Various members of the group then pointed out that Britain also has social security legislation; that the unemployed in Britain also get subsistence benefits; that in Britain Trade Unions also protect their members' interests. The reporter then drew attention to what he called "workers control" in Soviet industry. The Russian factory manager, he claimed, was in an impossible position, between the devil of the requirements of the Plan and



The Kremlin and St. Basil's Cathedral

the deep blue sea of the workers' demands. The Trade Union Committee discusses every aspect of the Plan and rejects what it does not like. "Why," he proclaimed, "116 factory managers were sacked last year alone, as a result of trade union action".

This was the signal for a barrage of questions from the now thoroughly restive audience:

"How can the workers control production if the government does?"

"Are the workers allowed to go on strike?"

("Well! No! there is no need to.")

"Who appoints the factory managers?"

"Does the Communist Party control the trade unions?"

("Only in the sense that they are the most active members.")

"What about the obviously flourishing black market?"

"Why are there queues outside the food shops?"

"How can you call it socialism when there are wages?"

"Did not Karl Marx call for the abolition of the wages system?"

"Can you have a money system in a socialist society?"

By this time our experts were getting decidedly tetchy. A member of the SPGB proceeded to outline the real nature of socialist society and point out that state capitalism operates in Russia. This apparently filled our hosts with the greatest respect. They called her "pro-

fessor", saying "With regard to the lady professor's last question", and "with great respect to the lady professor's great knowledge of the subject..." Finally, the senior speaker climbed down and freely admitted that socialism had not been, and could not yet be, established in Russia because the problems of production had not been completely solved. But he claimed that the Russian people understood this, too. "We are working towards it", he said.

It was pointed out, amid general agreement, that nobody underestimated the enormous achievements of the Russian people in turning a vast, barbaric feudal cess-pit into a modern industrial country in the shortest time in the world's history. We realised the frightful toll of two world wars but we, like Lenin, had done our best to persuade the workers not to slaughter each other. To call the set-up in Russia socialism was untrue, and to claim to be "building socialism" while establishing state capitalism was dangerously misleading.

What our experts thought about all this, they did not say. They certainly looked as though they were thinking very hard. But that could have been indigestion.

HORATIO

OBITUARY

Jim Glitz

It is with great sadness that we report the loss of our comrade, Jim Glitz, who died of a heart attack on 10 March. Jim joined the Hackney branch in 1946 and in recent years was an enthusiastic contributor to the activities of Islington branch. Our comrade was an outspoken opponent of all upholders of privilege, including the "leaders" on the left wing who believe workers are too stupid to do their own thinking. Working in the kitchen of London's most fashionable resting place for parasites, the Ritz Hotel, Jim was able to observe at first hand the sickening class division of capitalism. "Glitz of the Ritz", as he was nicknamed, was a remarkably compassionate man, whose respect for all living beings and hatred of callousness marked him as a real socialist. I travelled with Jim on several speaking tours and was struck by his single-minded dedication to revolutionary change and his constant willingness to lend a hand whenever practical work needed to be done. Jim Glitz's repertoire of jokes will go down in history as among the worst on record; but his skill as a chess player will not be forgotten easily by the numerous members who tried, but failed, to win against him. Above all, Jim will be remembered by his comrades as a principled socialist who, compared to the idle capitalists who employed him, was a giant.

SC

Apartheid: divide and rule

Apartheid is essentially a pre-capitalist form of oppression; it is an attempt to impose the colour patterns of a frontier community onto a modern industrial economy. It will never work properly because what the government is trying to separate, the economy keeps bringing together. (*Socialist Viewpoint*, SPNZ, Sept-Oct. 1981.)

A traditional feature of apartheid has been a legally sanctioned colour bar broadly restricting skilled work to whites. The underlying racial prejudice upon which this was erected can be traced back to the days of slavery, when manual labour was held in contempt by Europeans. The prohibition of slavery in 1834 was a significant factor behind the Great Trek, a mass migration of disgruntled Boers beyond the reach of British jurisdiction. According to Freda Troup:

The assumption that non-whites were the labouring class had spread across the land with the trekkers. Only in the Cape where Malay Slaves had from early days formed an important section of the artisan community had the colour line between skilled and unskilled worker largely been smudged and ignored.¹

White penetration of the interior dispossessed many of the original occupants of what had been their tribal land, forcing them into various forms of servitude on white farms. The disruption of the tribal subsistence economy through the influence of tax and trade was intensified by the discovery of gold and diamonds in the second half of the nineteenth century. Vast numbers of Africans were sucked into the burgeoning towns to form a pool of unskilled labour while immigrant *uitlanders*, mainly from Europe, comprised the bulk of skilled labour in the mines. This pattern of employment reflected the prevailing differences between distinctive cultures—one, technologically primitive and agrarian; the other, advanced and urban-based. In time, however, it became fixed by custom and reinforced in legislation.

In the first decades of this century another stream of rural peasants poured into the towns: the landless Afrikaner. The devastation of the Boer War, periodic depressions and the shortage of land aggravated by the old Roman Dutch law of inheritance which subdivided farms into units too small to be economic, all contributed to the dispossession of thousands of Afrikaners of their traditional means of livelihood.

Lacking the skills of an urban proletariat and resentful of the wage-depressing influence of competition from low paid blacks, this substratum of "poor whites", numbering 160,000 by 1923 (10 per cent of the white population), became a thorny political issue. In 1910 the two ex-Boer republics and the Cape and Natal provinces became one state

under a single parliament, with the franchise largely (later completely) in the hands of the whites—a prerogative they readily exercised to entrench their privileged position. One of the first pieces of legislation introduced by the new union parliament was the 1911 Mines and Works Act which enforced a colour bar on the mines. The ideology of the Afrikaner farmer was thus transplanted into industry, as indeed were many small farmers themselves:

A new social and economic frontier had taken the place of the old frontier of land and settlement. Where once the natives were excluded from good land and ample water, now they were kept from skilled labour and high wages.²



Boer farmer in the Boer War

The mining companies did not in general welcome this intrusion of a backward ideology into the market place. But in their efforts to overcome the restrictions of the colour bar they met with the well organised resistance of the white trade union movement and a South African Labour Party which bitterly opposed the replacement of white by cheaper black labour.

In 1922 this issue came to a head when, following a big fall in the price of gold, employers were compelled to contravene the colour bar and employ blacks in semi-skilled work to cut costs. The strike that followed escalated into open revolt. Trade unionists, communists and nationalist Afrikaners combined under the odd-sounding banner "Workers of the world fight and unite for a white South Africa". The "Rand Revolution", as this was called, was mercilessly crushed with the loss of 230 lives. The miners were forced to accept a pay cut and the companies were left free to increase the proportion of cheap black labour, though technical advances enabled many of the jobs open to blacks to be fragmented and reclassified as unskilled work.

Two years later, the unpopular Smuts government which had sided with the employers against the white miners was defeated by a Labour-Nationalist coalition led by Hertzog. In a sense, what the pact symbolised was an alliance between the white farmers and the white working class:

Cresswell (leader of the Labour Party) devoted his whole political life to ousting the blacks from the mines. Hertzog's party on the other hand wanted cheap and servile Africans on the farms. The exclusion of Africans dovetailed with the farmers' insatiable demand for labour. This compatibility formed the economic basis of the partnership between white landowners and the labour aristocracy.³

The Pact government represented a watershed in South African history in that employers no longer offered serious resistance to the tightening stranglehold of racism on the economy but concentrated instead on making the best possible use of the system to which they had resigned themselves. Job reservation was vigorously reinforced on the mines in 1926, extended into the emerging manufacturing sector and subsequently set concrete hard over the course of several decades. To counter the possibility of unemployed white workers finding common cause with blacks, a "civilised labour" policy was pursued which gave preferential treatment to, and dramatically increased the proportion of, whites in state run services such as the railways. From 1924 onwards, in contrast to the preceding quarter century of almost continuous industrial turmoil, there were virtually no serious disputes in the mines.

In return for their compliance with these policies the government, which relied heavily on the mines for its revenue (vast sums of which went to subsidise white agriculture), assisted the mining companies in their efforts to hold down black wages and obtain labourers. Indeed an adequate supply of skilled labour which had been a vital requirement of the mining industry became even more so under the Pact government. The colour bar tended to perpetuate the labour intensive nature of gold mining and hence the need for plentiful labour; the sheer scale of mining meant that working techniques and the balance between labour and capital intensity were fixed at the beginning of a mine's life and could not be significantly altered thereafter. But holding down black wages to such low levels threatened the supply of unskilled labour which was attracted by higher wages and better conditions in manufacturing. However, the mining companies could not raise wages without jeopardising the life of marginal mines (which comprised half the industry) and hence the employment of many white miners. Thus influx control was tightened, indirectly compelling blacks to seek work on the mines or white farms. This still did not ensure an adequate supply of labour for the mines, which operated below capacity in the period 1924-30. Conse-

quently, the mines with government backing recruited extensively from abroad so that by 1973 79 per cent of black miners were foreign contract workers. (Political developments since then in countries such as Mozambique have, however, disrupted this source of labour causing black wages to rise.)

By the 1960s a paradoxical development in the South African economy had become glaringly apparent: an acute and growing shortage of skilled labour alongside high black unemployment (even amongst the more educated blacks). An important factor behind this was the shift away from labour intensive farming and mining industries—the traditional pillars of the apartheid economy—towards the more capital intensive manufacturing industry. This in turn placed a growing

group".⁴ Political reform had become economically imperative.

The government's response at first was one of greater, if cautious, flexibility:

Inevitably non-whites unofficially—job reservation and colour bar regardless—infiltrated traditional white spheres of employment: coloured postmen, Indian railwaymen, African drivers on non-white buses, non-white clerks and typists. Especially were non-whites more and more to be found doing skilled and semi-skilled industrial work, generally at wages well below the white minimum. "There is no doubt", commented the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, "that employers in general are keen to develop the skills of Bantu workers".¹

By 1965 the Deputy Minister of Labour reported that 39 per cent of the economically active Africans were operatives or semi-skilled workers.

Yet still the shortage of skilled labour persisted. Accordingly, the government itself has moved from passively condoning breaches of the colour bar to actively lifting restrictions on the employment of black labour. The Muldergate Scandal of 1977 brought to power a new prime minister, and marked a shift in the balance of power from the *verkrampste* (conservative) to the *verligte* (liberal) wing of the ruling National Party and prepared the ground for further liberalisation. By late 1980 Fanie Botha, Minister of Labour, proposed new legislation allowing more skilled job training to be opened to blacks. But despite the evidence of job reservation rapidly crumbling round the edges, there remain big obstacles in the path of this trend that are essentially a heritage of history.

The first of these is the remarkable resilience of the traditional hostility of whites towards black encroachment of what are regarded as white spheres of employment:

although the statutory colour bar has been formally scrapped, nine out of ten times it is imposed by closed shop and apprenticeship agreements with white unions and these are still in force. The white unions have been staunch defenders of apartheid, using their muscle to preserve white supremacy and to block the advancement of Africans.⁵

Nowhere can this be seen more vividly than in the mining industry, described by Freda Troup as the "inner sanctuary of the colour bar". Recently the Mineworkers Union threatened industrial action if the government permitted blasting certificates to be issued to blacks. This, together with the threat of more whites defecting to the ultra right-wing Herstigte Nasionale Party, which made spectacular progress in the 1981 elections, has forced the government to act more cautiously.

Another obstacle to the disintegration of the colour bar is black education. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 which brought all Bantu education under the control of central government, was defended by Verwoerd on the grounds that

the mission schools through which many blacks received their education were unsympathetic to the government's policies and that:

By blindly producing pupils trained on a European model the vain hope was created among natives that they could occupy posts within the European community. This is what is meant by the creation of unhealthy 'white collar ideals' and the causation of frustration among the so called Educated Natives... There is no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour.¹

This discriminatory view of black education was reflected in the allocation of funds. In 1969-70 Bantu education received a mere R39m—a tenth of that spent on far fewer white pupils. Illiteracy is still high and the poor quality of education received by blacks in overcrowded schools lacking in facilities leaves many ill-equipped for work. According to a recent estimate, well over 100,000 jobs are unfilled because the necessary trained workers are not available.

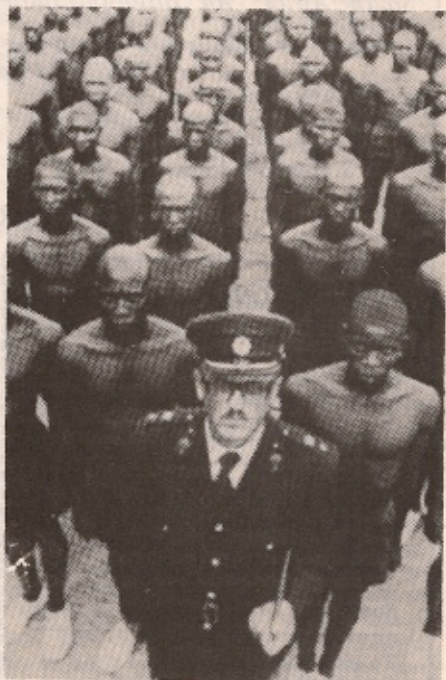
In 1979 and 1980 spending on black education and training rose by 30 and 50 per cent respectively. Such large increases were made possible by the rocketing price of gold, which in the period 1970-80 meant a huge inflow of R3.9 billion into the government coffers. Although the price of gold has since slumped, the ending of South Africa's apparent seclusion from the world recession has not been seen as an entirely unwelcome



Starving children in South Africa

strain on the colour bar. In 1945 the market value of mining companies was R972m while that of non-mining companies was R754m. By 1965 the positions had been reversed, with the former rising to R3664m and the latter R5399m. Ironically, the government played a vital part in this trend by encouraging the growth of a local manufacturing industry during the war by means of protectionist measures and by setting up various state corporations such as ISCOR (iron and steel) VECOR (heavy engineering goods) and SASOL (oil gas and chemicals from coal). Indeed the development of the mining industry itself was a powerful stimulus for manufacturing.

Growing concern over the economic bottleneck which the shortage of skilled labour had created has led the government's own Manpower Commission to state recently that "South Africa will not be able to realise its full developmental potential if it persists in attempting to secure its high level manpower requirements mainly from the white population



Black South African police recruits—with teacher

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development:

Nationalist politicians are looking to a recession to ease the skilled labour shortage, to reduce the differential of black wages (with the politically sensitive erosion of white differentials) and to stem the flow of urbanisation.⁴

Finally, what will be the consequences of a crumbling colour bar? One area where it is having an effect is black trade unionism, which has become a force to be reckoned with since its resurgence in the 1973 Durban strikes. Increasingly, a high proportion of strikes are being won, partly due to more effective organisation but also because of the penetration of black workers into semi-skilled and skilled work.

In companies whose black workers are more skilled, unions are often in a stronger position. Companies like Ford in Port Elizabeth and Volkswagen in Uitenhage found during strikes that the option of mass dismissal and quick replacement was not open to them because skilled workers are in such short supply and that "we would eventually have had to hire our own people back", as one company spokesman said.⁶

More fundamentally, the demise of the colour bar will serve to clarify the class structure in South Africa and to undermine the racial bigotry that traditionally divides its workers. Then shall they begin truly to make history and not be imprisoned by it.

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R. COX

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General strike in Luxembourg

On 5 April 80,000 workers in Luxembourg staged a one-day warning strike against government proposals aimed at preventing wages rising in 1982 as fast as the cost of living.

A few months ago such a general strike seemed inconceivable. Even the Trotskyists who put forward demands they consider unrealisable only in order to appear militant, were taken unawares. On a mass trade union demonstration held on 27 March they were distributing a leaflet headed "For a 24-hour General Strike"; little did they imagine that four days later most of the trade unions would accept this demand! Luxembourg's last strike (apart from those by EEC civil servants) took place in the private sector in 1973 and in the public sector in 1949.

Luxembourg, with a population of about 370,000 (of whom 30 per cent are non-citizens), is in close economic union with Belgium, both countries having the same currency and trading as a single unit. Its major industry—steel—is owned by Arbed, a private company with international connections. The other main source of employment is government service, including the railways, Post Office and, in recent years, banking and a Good-year tyre factory. The rest of the workforce is employed in small and medium-sized enterprises. There are also some 5,000 EEC civil servants.

The one-day general strike was called to protest against the government's proposal to end the automatic link between wages and the official "cost of living" which had been introduced in 1975. Under this arrangement each time the cost of living rose by 2.5 per cent, wages automatically rose by the same percentage. There is nothing particularly generous or extravagant about such an arrangement; as a matter of fact it is only a way of ensuring, in a period of rising prices, that the laws of the capitalist market are respected; that, in other words, sellers, in this case of labour power, continue to obtain a price more or less equal to the value of what they are selling. If wages do not rise as fast as the cost of living then in real terms—in terms of what wages will buy—they fall and workers are paid less than the value of their labour power.

Since trade unions exist to try to defend workers' wages and conditions, it is only natural that the Luxembourg trade unions should have tried to resist the government's openly proclaimed intention to reduce real wages. The government proposed to achieve this by abolishing the automatic indexation of wages and limiting wage increases in 1982 in most cases to 5 per cent, while at the same time announcing that it expected prices to rise by at least twice this amount.

This proposal was not motivated by malice, but was imposed on that govern-

ment by the way that capitalism operates. Capitalism is a system that can never work in the interest of the wage and salary earning majority. Certainly, in its periods of expansion, workers can expect rising wages (even if this is offset by having to work more and more intensively) but such periods of expansion are only one side of the coin. Capitalism does not, and cannot, expand in a smooth and continuous way; its growth pattern is one of fits and starts, of alternating periods of expansion and contraction (booms and slumps). The other side of a period of expansion and rising wages is the period of contraction and falling wages which inevitably follows it.

The last period of expansion came to an end in 1975 when capitalism entered into its current world recession. Wages—real wages, that is, what they can buy—tend to fall in a slump because the increased unemployment turns labour market conditions more in favour of employers. Supply of labour power comes to exceed demand so, as always happens in such circumstances, its price (wages and salaries) tends to fall. Workers can, by trade union organisation and action, slow down this tendency but they can't reverse or even halt it. Thus in Britain over the past few years trade unions have been forced to settle for single-figure "increases" even though prices have been rising in double-figures. In Germany too unions have had to settle for rises smaller than that expected in the cost of living.

Until now workers in Luxembourg, like those in Belgium, had been protected against such decreases in real wages by this automatic linking of wage increases to price increases. Indexation should in theory work in both directions: if the cost of living falls then so should wages and by the same percentage. Before the present period of chronic currency inflation began in all countries after the last world war, indexation, then known as "the sliding scale", was popular among employers because it meant that in a slump if prices fell then so automatically did wages. The sliding scale was unpopular with workers and their unions because, although they had no illusions about being able to maintain money wages at their old level in a period of falling prices, they felt with some justification that a less rigid system held out the hope of negotiating a fall in money wages less than that in the cost of living.

The new element nowadays is that, because of government inflation of the currency through the excessive issue of inconvertible paper money, prices no longer fall in periods of slump. On the contrary, they continue to rise. Hence the phenomenon of "stagflation" which so baffles capitalist economists. But, with indexation, such currency inflation

means that money wages go on rising in line with prices even in a slump or, more precisely, that real wages do not fall.

This is all very well while it lasts—but it can't last because maintaining wages artificially high by such a mechanism goes against the logic of capitalism which requires that real wages fall in a slump as one of the ways of creating the conditions for the next period of expansion. In the end any government of capitalism has to take the only action open to it in the circumstances, namely, the abolition of the mechanism—the automatic indexation of wages—which prevents real wages falling. The Belgian government had already done this. Now it has been followed by the Luxemburg government.

As we have already said workers, through their trade unions, should resist such a blatant, frontal attack on their living standards. However they should have no illusions about being able to prevent real wages from falling in a slump. Under capitalism, even in times of expansion and boom, the cards are stacked in favour of the employers who are in the dominant bargaining position because they own the means of wealth production. In times of slump and contraction the employers' hand is strengthened even further by the existence of an increased pool of unemployed. In these circumstances the most that unions can achieve is to slow down the fall in real wages, *limiter des dégâts*, to limit the damage, as the French say.

One thing however is clear: if workers sit back and do nothing they may well lose more than if they stand up and strike. In fact on such occasions—as in Britain in 1926—a general strike is often the only means of testing the situation, of

finding out what the true bargaining strength of both sides is. In the case of Luxemburg it was undoubtedly because of the previous strike-free record of the workforce that the government felt so confident about going as far as it did, openly proposing measures to make living standards fall in 1982 by at least 5 per cent. EEC civil servants who were under similar pressure last year managed to come out relatively well in comparison in negotiating a fall of about the same amount but over five years.

Even if the strike of 5 April was not successful in terms of getting the government to make concessions—the government's austerity measures were passed by Parliament the very day of the strike—this reaction by the workers will at least have shown governments that in the future they can no longer take the working class in Luxemburg for granted.

But all this is purely defensive, purely concerned with trying to slow down things getting worse. But things will get worse as this is what happens under capitalism in a slump. Later on, as the capitalist economic cycle continues and the slump gives way to a new period of boom and expansion, there will be some improvements, some increases in real wages. But these improvements will be precarious and temporary and will be wiped out when the next slump comes round.

We put to workers in Luxemburg the same question we put to workers in Britain and elsewhere: is this merry-go-round, this running fast just to stay still, all you want out of life? Because this is all that capitalism has to offer you.

ALB (Luxemburg)



Lord Beaverbrook & Nationalisation of Banks

It is the fate of Labour Party reformists always to have their reform demands stolen by the openly capitalist parties as soon as the work of popularisation has been carried sufficiently far to give the demands an electoral value. A particularly cruel theft has just been perpetrated at the expense of the Independent Labour Party by Lord Beaverbrook who is a Conservative.

At the last election the workers showed emphatically that they did not like the Labour Party-I.L.P. programme. This chilling experience caused the I.L.P. to polish up its old reforms and look around for some new and more attractive ones. One of the old demands that appeared to contain promise of being a good vote-catcher was the nationalisation of the banks. But hardly had the I.L.P. published the Report of its Finance

Policy Committee, recommending a scheme of state control for banking and credit, than Lord Beaverbrook snatched it up.

These are the two proposals for a state bank.
The I.L.P.:

A central bank supervising the issue of credit and currency, international exchange operation and government income and expenditure. A unified banking system, with branches throughout the country, for the local financing of industry and commerce. (*New Leader*, March 25.)

Lord Beaverbrook:

Send the Bank of England about its business! Let it continue to perform the functions of a joint-stock bank. Establish a Central bank, owned by the nation, equipped with all the powers necessary to provide abundant credit and hedged about with all the restrictions required to safeguard the permanence and stability of the structure. (*Sunday Express*, April 17, 1932.)

Lord Beaverbrook's article was headed "Don't reduce wages", and in it he appealed to the workers to rally round the demand for nationalised banking as the way to prevent wage reductions.

(From an editorial *State Control of Banking—Lord Beaverbrook steals some thunder*, published in the *Socialist Standard*, May 1932.)

Book review



Pictures of racism

Women under Apartheid, IDAF, 1981.

This book is published by the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa—an organisation opposed to racial oppression—in co-operation with the United Nations Centre Against Apartheid. It consists of some 100 photographs from an exhibition commissioned by the UN, accompanied by a sketchy analysis of apartheid and its manifold consequences chiefly from the perspective of black women, and an account of their bitter and protracted struggle against the system from 1913 onwards.

At the heart of apartheid is the migrant labour system, a consequence of the government's policy of "separate development"; the territorial division of South Africa into a developed "white" area comprising 87 per cent of the land, and the various tribal homelands or bantustans to which the African 70 per cent of the population belong. Roughly two-thirds of the 9½ million Africans in white South Africa are migrant labourers on annual contracts; the remaining one-third qualify for the right to reside in black townships or "locations" under the stringent conditions laid down in section 10 of the Urban Areas Act.

Influx control is the means whereby the system is maintained, ensuring an adequate supply of cheap labour. Those "economically superfluous" to the requirements of the white area are denied entry or are "re-located" to a homeland called their "country" to which they may never have been before. Indeed, since 1948 over 3 million Africans have been forcibly removed in this fashion and dumped in the homelands, compounding the desperate poverty there.

This basic pattern of black existence applies with particular force to women. More women (6.1m) than men (5.2m) live in the homelands since male migrants cannot take their families with them. As a result broken marriages and desertion are common and it is chiefly the women who bear the cost.

Sexually discriminatory laws deny women any right to land, though government appointed chiefs may allocate them areas for use. With overcrowding and poverty intensifying, increasing numbers of women are being forced off the land and into the migrant labour system. Like the men they are accommodated either in single quarters belonging to their employers or single sex, barrack-like hostels into which they cannot bring husbands, boy-friends or children.

As a group, black women earn considerably less than even the low wages paid to black men. For the most part they work as domestic servants for white women. According to the author Hilda Bernstein, after childbirth "the primary role of a white woman becomes that of consumer and living display, through leisure and adornment, of her husband's wealth", and the possession of a domestic or two enables them to fulfil this role.

Black women are discriminated against by residential laws in many ways. For example, the stipulation in the Urban Areas Act that the right to reside in an urban area is dependent on whether one has worked for a single employer in the area continuously for at least ten years, or lived in the area continuously for at least 15 years, works against women who stay with their parents in rural areas for the birth of their babies. Neither can women be registered as tenants in townships or stay in urban areas if widowed or divorced.



Anti-Pass Laws protest, 1950s

Some of the photographs are particularly poignant. An old woman in socks sitting against a wall mending her skirt with gnarled hands; another prostrate on the ground beside her scanty belongings, waiting for a train to some settlement camp. On the other hand, the picture of a crowd of black demonstrators bearing posters "WE STAND BY OUR LEADERS" certainly won't arouse sympathy in any socialist; indeed, one of the failings of movements such as the ANC is its elitist outlook. Apart from anything else, the existence of a hierarchical structure enables the authorities swiftly to immobilise protest by arresting its leaders. A rigorously democratic organisation would be much the stronger for not having to rely on "leaders".

Finally, the book fails to discuss the sort of society which the struggle against apartheid seeks to bring about. It also tends towards generalisation and exaggeration and serves to obscure understanding of the structure of present society. An example is the statement that "through the apartheid system the wealth and resources are controlled by the ruling white minority". This is not true. There are black capitalists and impoverished white workers, as well as white capitalists and black workers. Anyone who imagines that changing the colour of the ruling class will make a significant difference to the lot of black workers need look no further than the various despotic regimes of the homelands, such as Matanzima's Transkei or Sebe's Ciskei, which flaunt their corrupt opulence in the face of black starvation.

R COX

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OF CAPITALISM IN
LATIN AMERICA**
Speaker: E. Grant
Doctor Johnson House
Bull Street

CROYDON

Wednesday 26 May, 7.30
**THE FALKLAND ISLANDS:
A SOCIALIST ANALYSIS**
Speaker: P. Lawrence
Ruskin House
Coombe Road

GLASGOW

Sunday 2 May, 7.30
MAY DAY RALLY
Ingram Hotel, Ingram Street

GUILDFORD

Friday 14 May, 8.00
**APARTHEID: HOW DID IT BEGIN
AND WHERE WILL IT GO?**
Speaker: R. Cox
Venue: 'phone (0483) 34958

LONDON

Saturday 1 May, 7.30
MARXISM AND MONETARISM
Speaker: E. Hardy
52 Clapham High Street, SW4

Saturday 29 May, 7.30
MARX AND INCREASING MISERY
Speaker: J. D'Arcy
(venue as above)

ISLINGTON

Thursday 13 May, 8.00
**DEBATE:
IS ZIONISM COMPATIBLE
WITH SOCIALISM?**
E. Grant (SPGB) v. B. Kissen,
Secretary of the Labour Zionists
(Poale Zion)
Prince Albert pub
Wharfedale Road, King's Cross, N1

Thursday 27 May, 8.30
CRISIS OF THE LEFT, 1974-82
Speaker: R. Critchfield
(part of series "British Capitalism in
the Twentieth Century")
(venue as above)

PADDINGTON

Wednesday 12 May, 8.30
DARWIN AND MARX
Speaker: H. Young
Princess Royal, Hereford Road, W2
(off Westbourne Grove)

Wednesday 26 May, 8.30
CATHOLICISM: A MARXIST VIEW
Speaker: R. Barltrop
(venue as above)

HARINGEY

Wednesday 12 May, 8.15
**THE NHS:
AN UNHEALTHY FUTURE?**
Speaker: R. Critchfield
Muswell Hill Library
Queen's Avenue, N10

Wednesday 26 May, 8.15
A NEW WORLD SOCIETY
(venue as above)
NB: There will be no Haringey Branch
business meetings on 13 and 27 May

MANCHESTER

Saturday 1 May, 8.00
**MAY DAY MEETING:
WORKERS UNITE FOR SOCIALISM!**
Britons Protection pub
Great Bridgewater Street
(corner Lower Mosley Street)

SUNDERLAND

Monday 3 May, 7.30
**REJECT THE LABOUR PARTY—
UNITE FOR SOCIALISM**
Mount and Daisy pub
Hylton Road, Sunderland

SWANSEA

Friday 14 May, 7.30
ANARCHISM
Speaker: Ron Cook
Central Library
Alexandra Road

Monday 10 May, 7.30
WOMEN'S LIBERATION
Speakers from Swansea Women's
Centre
(Venue as above)

BOLTON WEEKEND SUMMER SCHOOL

17 & 18 July
Conference Centre
Chadwick Street

Classes will be held on:
(1) WORK AND LEISURE
(2) THE ECONOMICS OF THE
RECESSION
(3) MARX AND PHILOSOPHY
(4) POLITICS AND TRADE
UNIONS
(5) LENINISM IN BRITAIN,
1917-1982

Accommodation will be available at
£5.75 per night. If you are
interested in further details please
contact the Bolton Branch
Secretary (see Directory)

**VISITORS ARE
WELCOME AT
ALL MEETINGS**

DIRECTORY

BRANCHES

BIRMINGHAM. Thursdays 7.30. Dr. Johnson House, Bull St, Corres. W. Mack, 36 Alderpiers Rd, Shard End, Birmingham B34 7RR. Tel. (021) 748 5805.

BOLTON. Tuesdays 8.30. The Founders Arms, St. George's Street, Corres. D. Heyes, 147 Devonshire Road, Heaton, Bolton. Tel. (0204) 492639.

CAMDEN. 1st and 3rd Thursday in month, 6.00 to 8.00. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Corres. Conway Hall.

CROYDON. Wednesdays 7.30. Ruskin House, Coombe Road, Croydon. Corres. J. Ure, 88 Southbridge Road, Croydon.

EAST LONDON. 1st and 3rd Monday in month, 8.00. 300 Barking Road, East Ham, E6. Corres. D. Deutz, 4 St. Mary's Avenue, Wanstead E.11

EDINBURGH. 2nd and 4th Thursday in month, 8.00. First of May Bookshop, Candlemaker Row. Corres. SPGB, c/o First of May Bookshop.

GLASGOW. Mondays 8.00. Woodside Halls, Clarendon St. Corres. J. Fleming, 42 Clifford St, Glasgow G51 1PA.

GUILDFORD. 2nd and 4th Friday, 7.00. Details of venue and Corres. T. Bullen, 17 Bellfields Road, Guildford GU1 1QG. Tel. (0483) 34958.

HARINGEY. Thursdays 8.30. Tottenham Library, 391 High Road, N17. Corres. 17 Dorset Road, N22.

ISLINGTON. Thursdays 8.00. Prince Albert (1st floor), 37 Wharfedale Road, N1. Corres. Chris Dufton, 19 Brambledown, 77 Crouch Hill, N4.

NORTH EAST. Wednesdays 8.00. East Community Centre, Moor Terrace, Hendon, Sunderland. Corres. V. Maratty, 184 The Avenue, Deneside, Seaham, Co. Durham.

NORTH WEST LONDON. 2nd and 4th Thursday in month, 8.00. Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Rd, NW6 (corner of Abbey Rd, next to Lillie Langtry pub). Corres. C. May, 1 Hanover Rd, NW10. Tel. 459 3437.

PADDINGTON. 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 8.30. The Princess Royal. Hereford Road, W2 (off Westbourne Grove). Corres. SPGB, 76 Ladbroke Grove, W11.

SOUTHEAST. 1st and 3rd Tuesday in month, 8.00. 19 Kingswood Chase, Leigh-on-Sea. Corres. A. Partner, 28 Hambro Hill, Rayleigh, Essex. Rayleigh (0268) 774974.

SOUTH WEST LONDON. Mondays (except Bank holidays) 8.00. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4. Corres. 52 Clapham High Street, SW4.

SWANSEA. 2nd and 4th Monday in month, 7.30. Central Library, Alexandra Rd, Swansea. Corres. H. K. Moss, 4 Aylesbury Rd, Brynmill, Swansea SA2 0BS. Tel. (0792) 464872.

WEST LONDON. Fridays 8.00. The Old Chiswick Town Hall, Turnham Green (corner of Sutton Court Road), W4. Corres. c/o the Town Hall.

FOR INFORMATION

BATH. E. Blewitt, The Cottage, Hartley Farm, Upper Swainswick, Bath. Tel. (0225) 487048. 852051.

BRISTOL. J. Flowers, 101 Chesterfield Road, St Andrews, Bristol BS6 5DS.

CAMBRIDGE. Andrew Westley, c/o Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4.

CHELMSFORD. R. Layton, 31a Katonia Avenue, Maylandsea, Chelmsford, Essex. Tel. 0621 741668

DERBY. Frank V. Cash, 62 William St, Derby DE1 3LZ.

DONCASTER. F. Edwards, 41 Kelsey Gdns, DN4 7QA. Tel. (0302) 530454.

DUNDEE. J. Finnie, 28 Hill Street.

EAST GRINSTEAD. A. Atkinson, 24 Estcote Drive, East Grinstead, W. Sussex. Tel. (0342) 311874.

EAST KILBRIDE. J. Thompson, 2 Balfour Terrace, Murray, East Kilbride. Tel. (32) 23083.

EDGWARE. A. Waite, 61 Fairfield Crescent, Tel. (011) 952 3556.

HARROW. Ian Stuart, 39 Eastcote Road, Pinner, Middlesex. Tel. 886 3372.

HARWICH. C. Bennet, 48 Ashley Road, Dovercourt, Harwich, Essex.

EAST HANTS. Robin Cox, Chintay Cottage, Rectory Lane, Bramshott, Liphook. Tel. 723654.

HULL. Peter Pink, 9 Beech Grove, Beverley Road. Tel. (0482) 441296.

MEDWAY (Kent). L. Cox, 110 Bell's Lane, Hoo, Rochester, Kent. Tel. (0634) 250513.

MID LANCs. Brian Livesey, 149 Belfield Road, Accrington, Lancs.

NEWPORT. Miles Webb, 23 Stamford Court, Newport, Gwent.

NORTHUMBERLAND. Paul G. Robinson, 33 Princes St, Corbridge, Northumberland NE 45. Tel. (043471) 2726.

NORWICH. Colin Green, 3 Bell Meadow, Hingham, Norfolk NR9 4HT. Tel. 985 468.

NOTTINGHAM. 3rd Thursday in month, 7.30. 33 Church Drive, Carrington. Corres. F. V. Cash, 62 William St, Derby DE1 3LZ.

PONTYPRIDD. B. Johnson, 1 Pleasant View, Beddau, Pontypridd, Mid-Glamorgan. Tel. (0443) 208447.

OXFORD. J. Robertson, 80 Iffley Turn, Oxford. Tel. (0865) 770834.

SKIPTON. R. Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Tel. Grassington (0756) 752621.

SUNDERLAND. J. Toomey, 9 Gillingham Rd, Grindon. Tel. (078) 324 2039.

WALSALL. Peter Faultless, 78 Brace Street, Caldmere, Walsall WS1 3PW.

WELWYN GARDEN CITY. C. Cox, 118 Oakdale, Welwyn Gdn City. Tel. 27591.

WEST YORKSHIRE. Corres. 20 Brandfort St, Bradford BD7 2ES. Tel. (0274) 575136.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

BRISTOL. 3rd Wednesday in month, 7.30. The Waggon and Horses, Stapleton Road, Bristol. Corres. J. Flowers, 101 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol BS6 5DS.

CARDIFF. A. McNeeney, 51 Pen-y-lan Road, Roath, Cardiff. Tel. 022 487048.

DONCASTER. 1st Monday in month, 8.00. Mason's Arms pub, Market Place, Doncaster.

MANCHESTER. Thursdays 8.00. Briton's Protection, Gt. Bridgewater Street (corner of Lower Mosley Street). Corres. B. Preston, 68 Fountains Road, Stretford, Tel. (061) 747 0711.

MID HERTS. 2nd Wednesday in month. Campus West Library, Welwyn Garden City. Corres. P. Mattingly, 27 Woodstock Road, Broxbourne, Herts. Tel. 6164872.

MILTON KEYNES. Fortnightly. C. Kincaid, 14 Weavers Hill, MK11 2BD.

NORTHAMPTON. K. Taylor, 25 Cottesmore Way, Wellingborough.

NOTTINGHAM. 3rd Monday in month, 7.30. 33, Church Drive, Carrington, Nottingham. Corres. F. V. Cash, 62 William Street, Derby DE1 3LZ.

READING. E. Tasker, 42 Redhatch Drive, Earley, Reading RG6 2QR.

STOKE-ON-TRENT. 1st and 3rd Thursday in month. For details Tel. 620072 or write to Brian Chaddock, 9 Sidmouth Avenue, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. C. Slapper, SPGB, University College London Union, Gordon Street, London WC1.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain holds:

1) That Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2) That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

3) That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4) That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

5) That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6) That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7) That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working-class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8) THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action, determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Anyone agreeing with the above principles and wishing to join should apply to nearest branch or Head Office.

Conversation with a deaf eye surgeon

It's a long time since I've had my eyes tested, the main reason being that I have no confidence in my ability to hold out against the standard opticians' con trick of *no new lenses without new frames*. In the end, however, I make the discovery that one eye is practically sightless, and being even more terrified of going blind than of being conned, I nerve myself and make an appointment.

The appointment is for 4.45: I'm kept waiting until almost 5.30. (Sublimate my anger by reminding myself that I might be going blind, or even have a brain tumour, and so can't create a scene.)

The eye tester finally puts in an appearance. He is very old. After perfunctorily apologising for the delay, he informs me that he is not "a mere optician, you know", but a real, bona-fide, fully-trained eye surgeon. Polite to a fault, I murmur that I will not hold it against him. The eye surgeon caps a hand to his ear and barks "What?" I say that I am very pleased to hear it.

The actual eye testing is over in about five seconds flat. (I wonder how much they get paid for it, but remind myself that at least I don't appear to be going blind or have a brain tumour.) Before taking me out to meet the mere optician and be conned into buying new frames for my new lenses, the eye surgeon leans forward to peer at the party badge which I wear on my lapel. "What's that?" he barks. "Socialist Workers' Party?" (He is obviously short-sighted as well as deaf.) I correct him, in a loud bawl: "Socialist Party of Great Britain." He peers closer to get at the small print. "World for the Workers, eh? So who are the workers?" "You", I shout, "and me".

The eye surgeon doesn't like this; he does not wish to be lumped with the rest of us as a mere-worker. He informs me that *he* is a member of one of the higher professions. Still polite, I inquire of him (in the obligatory shout) whether he does not have to sell his labour power in order to survive? He catches but the one word: labour. Ten minutes later, when he has finished, I yell at him again. "Do you possess a private income that you can live on?" This question infuriates him even more. No, he does *not* possess a private income. He has had to work for *his* living. Why, there were times at the start of this career when he was working up to eighty hours a week.

I ask him, in that case, why he does not consider himself to be a worker? The answer, apparently, is that he is "an intellectual". He tells me that I am talking to a "very intellectual type". When he was in the army he was given a special test which proved that the higher echelons of the medical profession were amongst the world's intellectual elite. I refuse to be sidetracked. I ask him what point he is trying to make. For a moment,

such is his intellectual power, he is at a loss; but after a few seconds comes back gamely with the contention that what he calls "the brains" of society must always be rewarded at a higher rate than what he calls "the rest". I remind him that what we were discussing was whether or not he was a worker.

Mysteriously, at this juncture, he starts talking about Russia.

I give up on the class question. We talk about Russia, instead. Having disposed of the myth that Russia is in any way a "socialist country", I go on to explain what socialism is all about. I yell at him about how common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution will mean the end of class exploitation. I bawl at him about how every human being will have free access to the social wealth. He suddenly cottons on: we are talking about a society without money. This is plainly an absurdity! "My dear young lady . . . how can you have a world without money?" We haven't even got enough top medical men *now* (His words: his claim) so how on earth do I suppose we should have them in a society where they were not only not going to be paid *more* than other people, but weren't even going to be paid at *all*?

I ask him whether, in such a society, he himself would still choose to be an eye surgeon? Or had he only become an eye surgeon for the money? Indignantly, he repudiates the suggestion: there are such things, my dear young lady, as ethics. So what makes him imagine, I shout, that in socialism we wouldn't have enough doctors? The answer comes back pat: it's nothing to do with money, after all, it's the simple lack of brain power. There isn't enough brain power in the world to supply us with all the doctors we need. Doctors, he repeats, are "highly intellectual types".

I resist the temptation to argue the point (he'll only start telling me again about the special test that "proved" it). Instead, I inform him that there is in the world a great deal of human potential which under a capitalist system is never allowed to be fulfilled; and that, moreover, in socialism a vast range of so-called "intellectual" activities necessary for the running of capitalism would be rendered obsolete, thus releasing large numbers of men and women to undertake far more socially beneficial tasks than they do at present.

To this—stumped, presumably, for any rational follow-up—the eye surgeon triumphantly informs me that I have not taken human nature into account. I ask him, in a bellow, what he conceives human nature to be. It seems that he conceives it as being something rather nasty. He does not *personally* feel the urge to rape and kill and cheat and pillage, but

apparently most of the rest of us do. I start bawling into his ear about how most of us, under capitalism, live in conditions of chronic insecurity and stress, but before I can get very far he produces his trump card: what about natural wickedness? I have forgotten natural wickedness!

We have a long shout into each other's faces about whether natural wickedness exists or whether it does not, during the course of which he suddenly makes the astonishing discovery that I must be an atheist. I accept the charge, and off we go again, on a different tack. He is very sorry for me that I do not share his belief in god; I am very sorry for *him* that he is so self-deluding. I tell him that his belief in god is nothing but ignorance and superstition and that he is like a child believing in fairies; whereupon *he* informs me that many medical men, "amongst the highest intellects in the land", share his belief: at which I lost all credibility by resorting to the language of the gutter and snarling that there has never been any divine law which states that medical men shall not be capable of making arrant ***** of themselves. The eye surgeon, fortunately, does not hear this. He is too busy losing all credibility himself by relating a long, rambling tale of how, during a time of personal tragedy, he only survived by reason of his faith; thus proving *irrefutably* that his faith is based on scientific truth and *god exists*.

At this point, I collapse beneath the weight of accumulated illogicalities. Neither my throat nor my temper is up to continuing the struggle. These self-confessed intellectuals can wear a person out.

I pick up my prescription and say stupidly that we'll resume the discussion in the afterlife. The eye surgeon pats me on the head and tells me that "in spite of everything" he is glad to have met me. I tell him that I am glad to have met him, too.

I tell his assistant, the mere optician, that I want my new lenses put into my old frames. I just wish I'd told the eye surgeon himself . . .

JEAN URE

**Socialist
Standard**
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